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# *Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

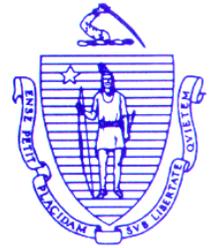
## **Division of Marine Fisheries**

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### *Marine Fisheries* Advisory

## **New Regulations Affecting the Commonwealth's Commercial and Recreational Groundfish Fisheries in the Gulf of Maine**

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In 2014, the stock assessment update for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod demonstrated that the stock was severely depleted with spawning stock biomass at 3-4% of its target. This prompted management action at both the state and federal level to reduce fishing mortality on GOM cod and better protect known spawning aggregations. At present, the Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) has filed final regulations to adjust the state's commercial trip limits for GOM cod, commercial seasonal GOM groundfish closures and recreational GOM cod and haddock limits.

### **Commercial Trip Limits**

*Marine Fisheries* has adopted a 200 pound GOM cod commercial trip limit for the state's limited entry groundfish fishery ([322 CMR 6.03](#)). Participation in this fishery requires a regulated groundfish permit endorsement (GE). Federally permitted groundfish vessels (sector or common pool) may not possess GOM cod in excess of this trip limit while fishing in state waters, but may transit state waters and land in Massachusetts more than the limit, provided the fish was lawfully caught in the federal zone. Additionally, *Marine Fisheries* has revised the trip limit for commercial fishermen who do not hold a GE. The open access commercial trip limit is now 25-pounds of mixed regulated groundfish species ([322 CMR 6.03](#)).

### **Commercial GOM Groundfish Closures**

*Marine Fisheries* long-standing GOM commercial groundfish closures ([322 CMR 8.12](#)) have been amended to both better protect known spawning cod aggregations and to provide commercial fishermen with improved access to other viable regulated groundfish species. The adjustments to these GOM commercial groundfish closures do not affect the status of any other gear or spawning closures, including but not limited to the state's existing mobile gear closures ([322 CMR 3.02](#)), gillnet closures ([322 CMR 4.09](#) and [322 CMR 4.11](#)), winter flounder spawning closures ([322 CMR 8.09](#)), seasonal cod conservation zone closures ([322 CMR 8.15](#)) or seasonal federal restrictions on the use of gillnets to protect harbor porpoises and large whales.

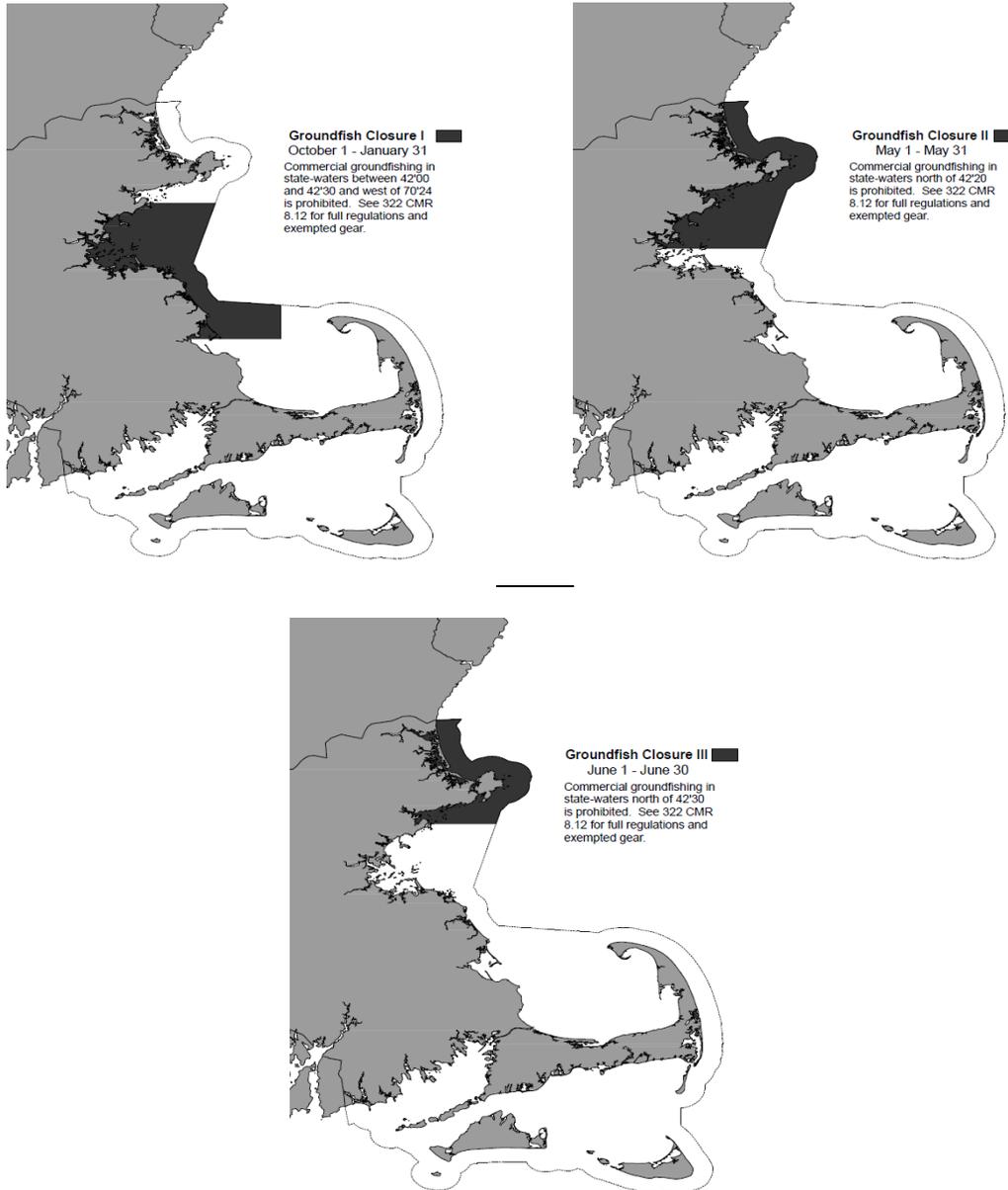
The new GOM commercial groundfish closures are as follows:

#### Fall/Winter Closure

From October 1<sup>st</sup> – January 31<sup>st</sup> all state-waters between 42°00' north latitude (Plymouth) and 42°30' north latitude (Marblehead) and west of 70°24' west longitude are closed to commercial groundfish fishing.

### Spring/Summer Closure

From May 1<sup>st</sup> – May 31<sup>st</sup>, all state waters between 42°20' north latitude (Boston) and the MA/NH border are closed to commercial groundfish fishing. Then from June 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>, all state waters between 42°30' north latitude (Marblehead) and the MA/NH border are closed to commercial groundfish fishing. The previously held April 1 – April 30 closure between 42°00' north latitude (Plymouth) and 42°30' north latitude (Marblehead) has been repealed.



### Exempted Gear

Certain gears are exempt from these seasonal groundfish closures. These gears include, hook and line for dogfish, bluefish, striped bass, Atlantic bluefin tuna; mid-water trawls; pots and traps; ocean quahog, surf clam and scallop dredges; and cast nets, surface gillnets and purse seines.

### **Recreational Limits for GOM Cod and Haddock**

Note that the state's new recreational fishing regulations for GOM cod and haddock ([322 CMR 6.03](#)) differ slightly from current federal regulations. Federal regulations still apply to all federal for-hire permit holders and any recreational fisherman fishing in federal waters.

#### GOM Cod

Anglers fishing exclusively in state-waters may now retain, possess and land one GOM cod per angler per calendar day that is at least 19-inches total length. This one-fish bag limit for private anglers is effective year-round. Anglers engaged in fishing aboard a for-hire vessel are prohibited from retaining, possessing or landing GOM cod.

#### GOM Haddock

The recreational minimum size for GOM haddock is now 17-inches and the recreational bag limit is three fish. There is no closed recreational fishing season for haddock in state-waters.

For more information about the state-waters groundfish management, please visit our website: [www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries)